



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO • DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND LAND USE
BUILDING DIVISION

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR GREEN BUILDING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

I. INTRODUCTION

The County of San Diego is concerned with protecting the environment and encouraging homeowners and builders to build using environmentally sound practices. These programs are in line with the County's Strategic Plan which has established goals of safeguarding our environment and quality of life and encouraging responsible development.

Historical building practices have been at a high cost to the environment. According to 2003 data from the web site of the U.S. Department of Energy's Center for Sustainable Development, buildings consume 40% of the world's total energy, 25% of its wood harvest and 16% of its water. The building industry is the nation's largest manufacturing activity, representing more than 50% of the nation's wealth and 13% of its Gross Domestic Product. There are more than 76 million residential buildings and nearly 5 million commercial buildings in the U.S. today. By the year 2010, another 38 million buildings are expected to be constructed. The challenge will be to build them smart, so they use a minimum of nonrenewable energy, produce a minimum of pollution, and cost a minimum of energy dollars, while increasing the comfort, health, and safety of the people who live and work in them.

Sustainable or "green" building practices can reduce the tremendous impact that building design, construction and maintenance has on both people and nature.

Sustainable building practices go beyond energy and water conservation to incorporate environmentally sensitive site planning, resource efficient building materials and superior indoor environmental quality. Some of the key benefits are:

- Lower electric and water utility costs
- Environmentally effective use of building materials

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- Enhanced health and productivity
- Long-term economic returns
- Reduced environmental impact

The County of San Diego has established incentive programs, policies, ordinances and guidelines to promote green building design and construction. The following sections II and III outline the incentive programs available through the County; section IV identifies several available rebate programs through other agencies; section V lists existing County policies and ordinances; and section VI lists available County guidelines.

II. GREEN BUILDING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The County of San Diego has a Green Building Incentive Program designed to promote the use of resource efficient construction materials, water conservation and energy efficiency in new and remodeled residential and commercial buildings. The program offers incentives of reduced plan check turnaround time and a 7.5% reduction in plan check and building permit fees for projects meeting program requirements.

To qualify for the incentives, the project must comply with one of the resource conservation measures listed below:

1. Natural Resource Conservation

- **Straw Bale Construction.** New buildings using baled straw from harvested grain for the construction of the exterior walls will qualify for the incentives.
- **Recycled Content.** A builder would be eligible for the incentive program by doing one of the following:
 1. Show that 20% or more of primary building materials being used contain, in aggregate, a minimum weighted average of 20% post-consumer recycled content materials (reused materials count as 100%)
 2. Show that at least one primary building material (such as roofing) is 50% or more post-consumer recycled content.

2. Water Conservation

- **Graywater Systems.** The installation of a graywater system in new or renovated buildings will qualify for the incentives. Graywater is the wastewater produced from bathtubs, showers, and clothes washers. In order to conserve water, it can be used for irrigation through subsurface distribution systems. A permit is required from the Department of Environmental Health for the graywater system.
(CPC Title 24, Part 5, California Administrative Code, Appendix G)

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3. Energy Conservation

- **Energy Use Below CEC Standards.** Residential projects that exceed the minimum Title 24 standards by 15% and commercial projects that exceed the standards by 25% qualify for the Green Building Incentive Program. The applicant must demonstrate to the Building Division that the project exceeds the Title 24 minimum standards by submitting compliance documentation done on a computer program approved by the California Energy Commission.

III. INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS

The County offers the incentive of no fees for the building permit and plan check of residential photovoltaic systems. (Homeowners Relief Act). Also, incentives are currently offered through the San Diego Regional Energy Office and through the California Energy Commission.

IV. REBATE PROGRAMS

- **San Diego Regional Energy Office**
www.sdenergy.org
- **California Energy Commission.**
www.energy.ca.gov
- **Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**
www.mwdh2o.com/mwdh2o/pages/conserv/program01.html
- **California Division of the State Architect**
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov/Sustainability/default.htm
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov/Sustainability/landscaping.htm
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov/Sustainability/greenbldg.htm
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov/Sustainability/energy.htm
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov/Sustainability/water.htm
- **California Integrated Waste Management Board**
www.ciwmb.ca.gov/GreenBuilding/
- **San Diego Gas and Electric**
www.sdge.com/efficiency/index.html

V. EXISTING POLICIES AND ORDINANCES

The County of San Diego currently has several policies and ordinances that promote green building design and construction and insure that all new development is done in a manner that is considerate of the County's natural resources.

These regulations are summarized below:

1. Protection of Natural Resources

- **Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management and Discharge Control Ordinance.** This ordinance establishes minimum requirements for the management of stormwater flows from development projects to reduce stormwater pollution, erosion and to protect and enhance existing water-dependent habitat.
<http://www.projectcleanwater.org/pdf/watershed-ordinance.pdf>
San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances Title 6, Division 7, Chapter 8
- **Multiple Species Conservation Program.** Preserves environmentally sensitive lands and creates open space lots and easements to prevent impacts to native habitats.
http://www.cosda103.co.sandiego.ca.us/portal/page?_pageid=341,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 1
- **Grading, Clearing and Watercourse Ordinance.** Prevents uncontrolled brushing and clearing of natural vegetation that would increase the potential for soil erosion.
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/docs/propgradord.pdf>
San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances Title 8, Division 7
- **Resource Protection Ordinance.** Helps establish special controls on development and protects sensitive lands and prevents their degradation and loss for certain discretionary projects.
http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/Resource/docs/3~pdf/res_prot_ord.pdf
A compilation of Ordinance numbers 7968, 7739, 7685 and 7631 (New Series)
- **Offstreet Parking Design Manual.** Requires use of landscaping to help reduce the heat build-up in parking lots.
<http://www.co.sandiego.ca.us/cnty/cntydepts/landuse/planning/zoning/ospdman.pdf>
- **Biological Mitigation Ordinance.** Promotes the preservation of biological resources by directing preservation toward land, which can be combined into contiguous areas of habitat or linkages.
http://cosda102.co.san-diego.ca.us//2_bmo/bmo.pdf
San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 1

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- **Groundwater Ordinance.** Establishes regulations for the protection, preservation, and maintenance of groundwater supplies throughout the County.
http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dplu/Resource/docs/3~pdf/GroundwaterOrdinance%20_%20Ord%207994.pdf
San Diego County Code of Regulatory Ordinances Title 6, Division 7, Chapter 7

2. Water conservation

- **California Plumbing Code.** Section 402 requires the installation of water conserving fixtures in new construction. These fixtures include faucets, shower heads and water closets.
- **Landscape Water Conservation Design Manual.** Efficient irrigation uses (including rain sensors), transitional zones, use of native plantings, restriction on turf, use of mulch, the preservation of existing vegetation and natural features, and the use of reclaimed water when available.
<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dplu/Resource/3~procguid/3~procguid.html#lands>
- **Water Management Plan.** State Assembly Bill 325, the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 1990, required that the Department of Water Resources develop a Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. This Model Ordinance was adopted and went into effect January 1, 1993. Cities and counties are required to enforce the ordinance as it applies to new and rehabilitated public and private landscapes that require a permit and on developer installed residential (single and multi-family) landscapes. The ordinance does not apply to projects under 2,500 square feet, homeowner installed residential landscapes, cemeteries, registered historical sites, and ecological restoration and mined reclamation areas without permanent irrigation systems.
(Section 6717c.1 of the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance)
<http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/landscape/ord/ord.cfm>
- **Water Management Plans for Model Homes (*Educational*).** For all applications for model homes, the Water Management Plan shall indicate the nature of public information documents placed at each model home describing water conservation principles used in the landscaping of said model home. Signs are required to be placed at each model home indicating the use of water conservation landscaping.
(Section 6717c.2 of the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance)

3. Energy Conservation

- **California Energy Efficiency Standards.** All new buildings in California are required to meet the energy efficiency standards contained in Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations. Some of the major building components regulated by these standards include: insulation, heating & air conditioning and water heating.
<http://www.energy.ca.gov/title24>

4. Air Quality

The County of San Diego Air Pollution Control District regulates businesses where the operations or equipment used in the buildings are capable of emitting air contaminants.

VI. AVAILABLE COUNTY GUIDELINES

The County of San Diego has guidelines available that promote green building design, construction and maintenance:

- **Community Design Guidelines.** Encourages the use of native plantings, preservation of significant trees.
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/Resource/3~procguid/3~procguid.html#lands>
- **Guidelines for the Installation of Graywater Systems.** Allows the use of graywater for irrigation – permit required through the Department of Environmental Health.
http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/deh/lwg/land_use/pdf/gray-water.pdf
- **Fire, Defensible Space and You.** List of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers capable of sustained growth and reproduction with only natural moisture. Plants listed are acceptable in fire prone areas of the County.
http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/cntydepts/landuse//fire_resistant.html